

# Swanson Reservoir

## 2009 Survey Summary



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs. Also included are graphs illustrating water level elevations and the resulting surface acres in Swanson Reservoir. Water levels have been on the rebound in recent years.

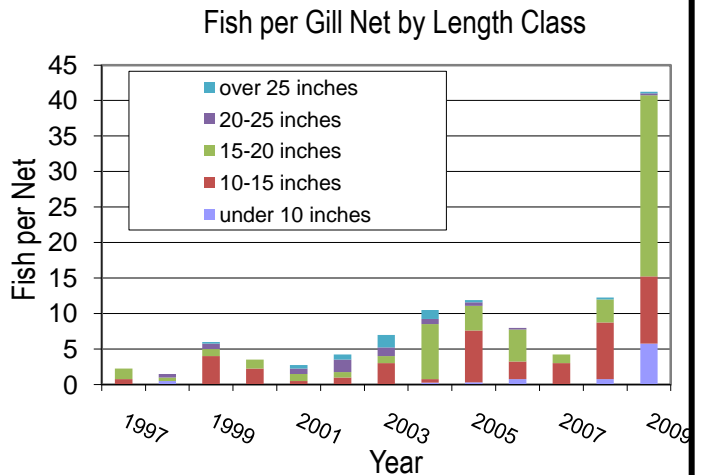
The big story at Swanson this year is the outstanding walleye sample. Biologists caught approximately 41 fish per net. Most of these fish ranged in size from 15-17 inches. Preliminary data also indicates that a good portion of these fish are 2 years old which means growth rates are exceptional. Swanson has been part of a fry stocking evaluation that began in 2005. So far results have been somewhat sporadic across the southwest reservoirs but data collected in 2009 appears favorable. Fry stocking is not the answer for all waterbodies but may lead to increased walleye recruitment for some reservoirs.

Overall, channel catfish from Swanson ranked near the bottom among southwest reservoirs for overall catch rates. This may be due, in part, to the introduction of blue catfish in 2008 and decreased stocking rates of channel catfish. Blue catfish should do well at Swanson because of warmer average water temperature and abundant shad population. Blue cats are different from channel catfish in several ways. They are more likely to feed in the water column and prefer live bait over prepared catfish baits or dead shad. Blue catfish have a pronounced hump on their backs and young blues lack spots found on small channel catfish. They are also able to grow to impressive size and will hopefully provide a unique fishery in southwest Nebraska. The bag limit for blue catfish is 1 fish per day and 2 fish in possession. Catfish anglers do well throughout the reservoir, but many fish are caught from underwater humps and near the dam and while drifting in the southwest part of the reservoir. Most flathead catfish are located near underwater humps or the rip-rap area along the dam. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch-and-release for larger channel catfish and flathead catfish.

White bass densities have leveled out somewhat but are still well above average. These numbers are relatively high because of a single strong year class. Wiper numbers have increased to approximately 11 fish per net in 2009. Beginning in 2009 wipers will be stocked every other year. This reduction is based on the data obtained by angler surveys which revealed low demand for wipers. Wipers are maintained in order to provide trophy opportunities and diversity for anglers. NGPC biologists will monitor the population and adjust the stocking rate of white bass and wipers as needed to maintain a fishable population but with more emphasis placed on white bass management.

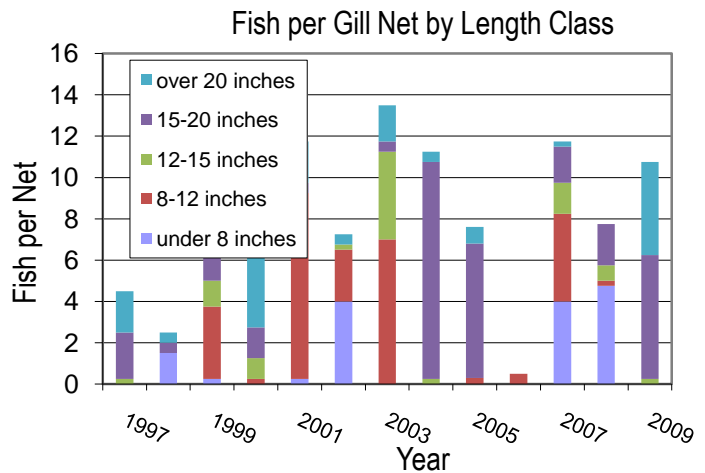
## Walleye

Walleye catch rates were considerably more in 2009. Biologists averaged a little over 40 fish per net in 2009, and most of these fish were harvestable, around 15 inches. Nebraska Game and Parks stocked approximately 2.6 million walleye fry in 2009 and there will be approximately 5 million fry stocked in 2010.



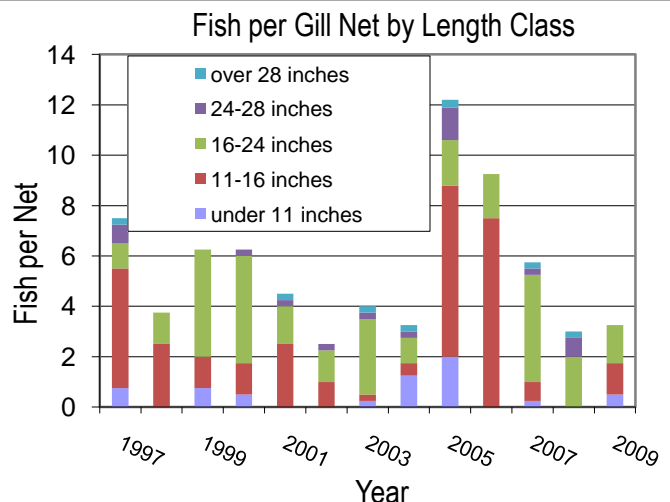
## Wipers

Wiper catch rates have fluctuated in recent years. Most fish sampled during 2009 were larger than 15 inches. The current stocking schedule has been decreased to alternate years due to the large numbers of white bass and introduction of blue catfish. NGPC will be stocking Wipers in 2010 and will continue to monitor wiper and white bass numbers.



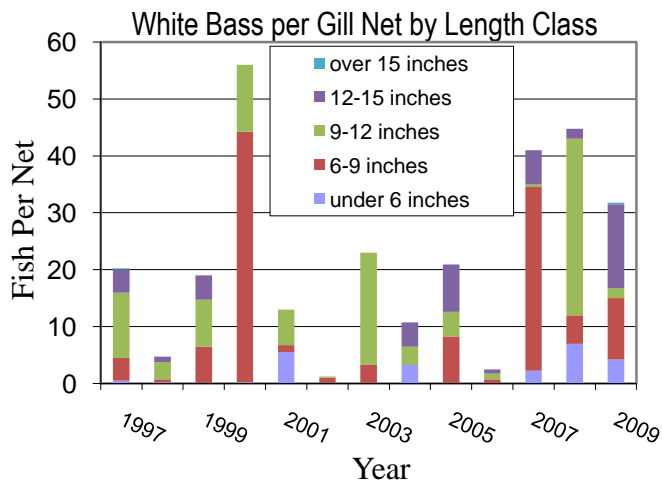
## Channel Catfish

Channel catfish catch rates have been declining since 2005. We caught approximately 3 fish per net in 2009. Swanson is stocked with channel catfish yearly but did not receive channel cats in 2009. Blue catfish were stocked in 2008 and 2009. Warmer water and an abundance of gizzard shad should allow blue cats to grow well and create a unique fishery in southwest Nebraska. After blue cats are established, NGPC will alternate stockings with channel catfish to provide multiple opportunities for catfish anglers.



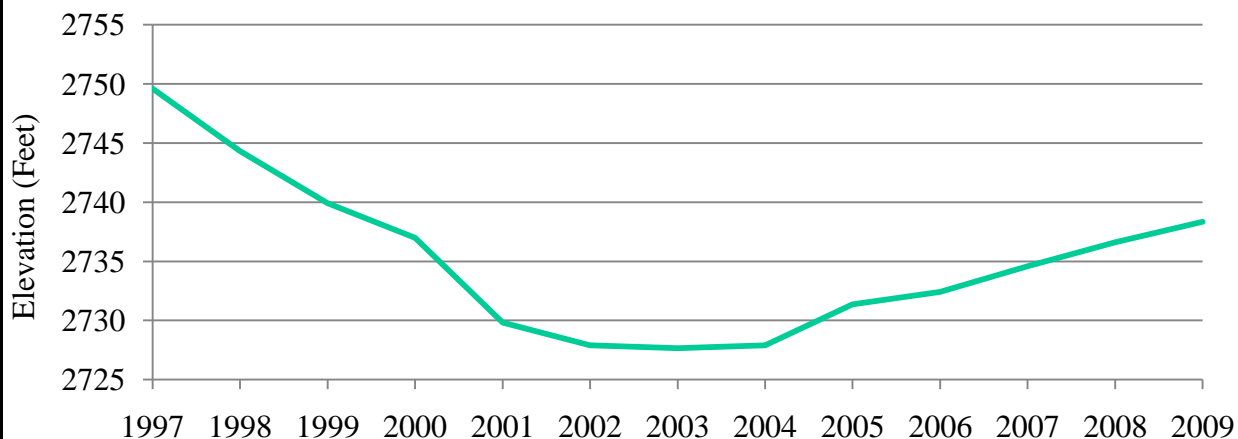
## White Bass

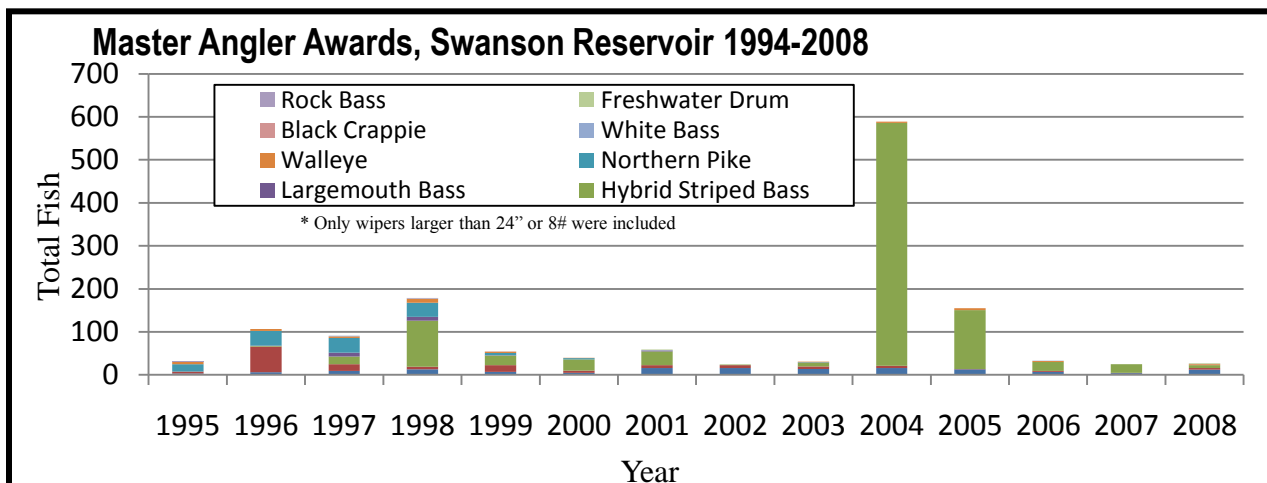
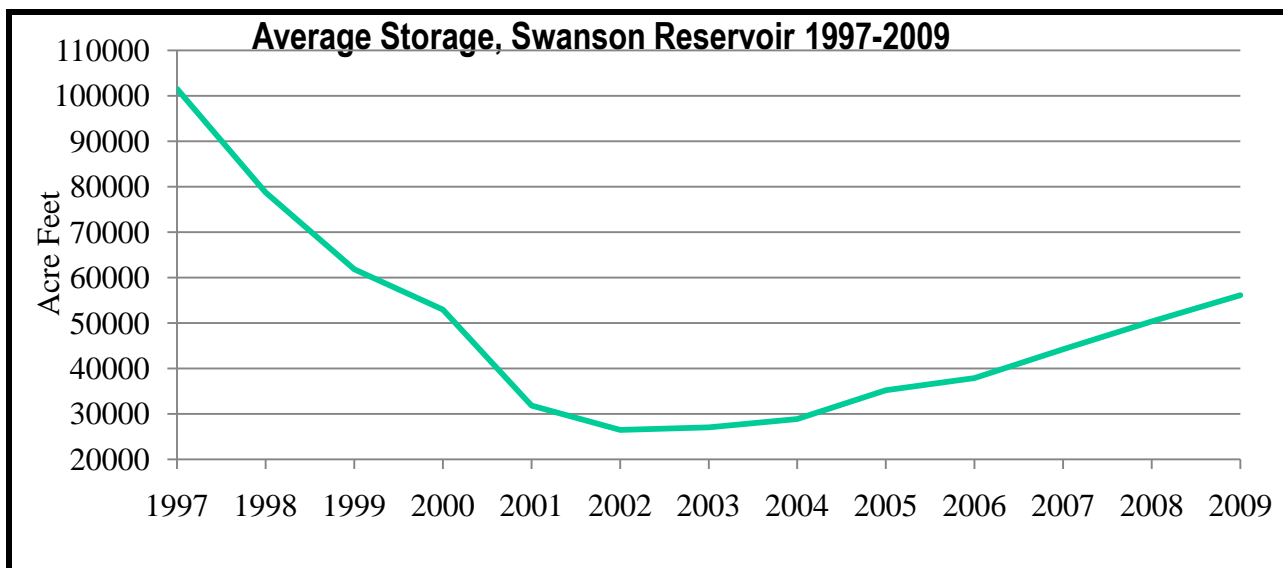
The 2009 white bass catch rate is down a bit from last year but is still above average. Biologists averaged approximately 31 fish per net. There were large numbers of small fish in 2007, and now these fish have grown to the 12-15-inch size class. These fish should continue to grow and provide angling opportunities for several years. Currently there is no white bass stocking at Swanson.



Water levels in Swanson are still low but have increased over the last few years. Water was released this summer so lake levels have dropped a bit resulting in the loss of some submerged structure.

## Average Annual Elevation, Swanson Reservoir 1997-2009

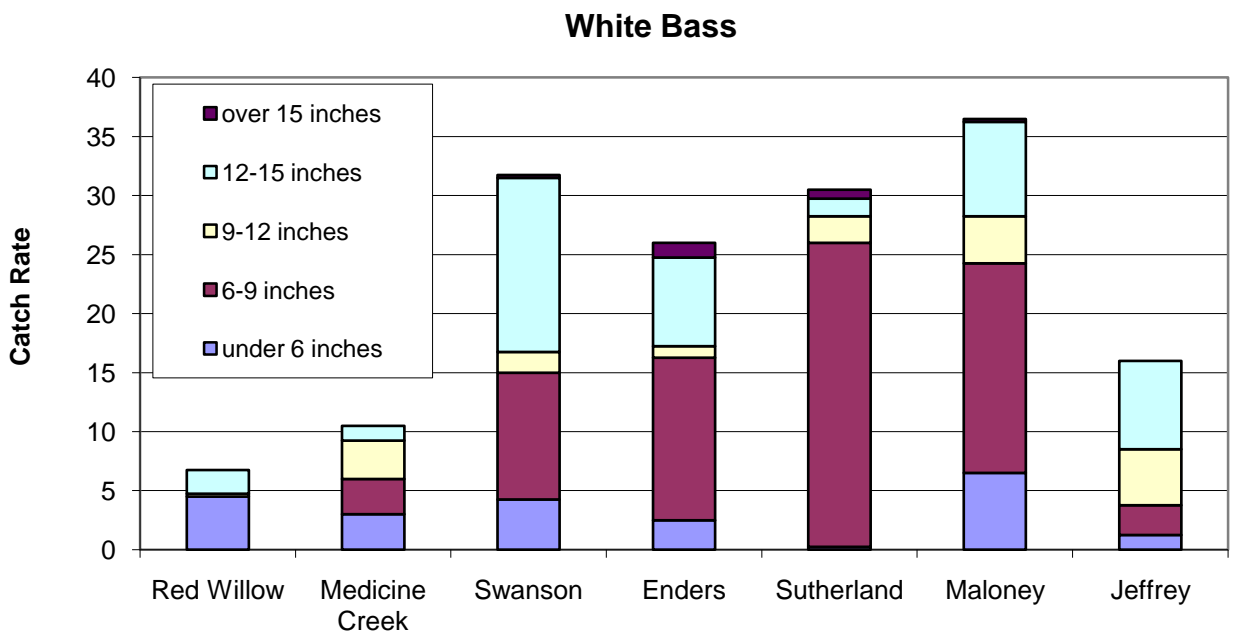
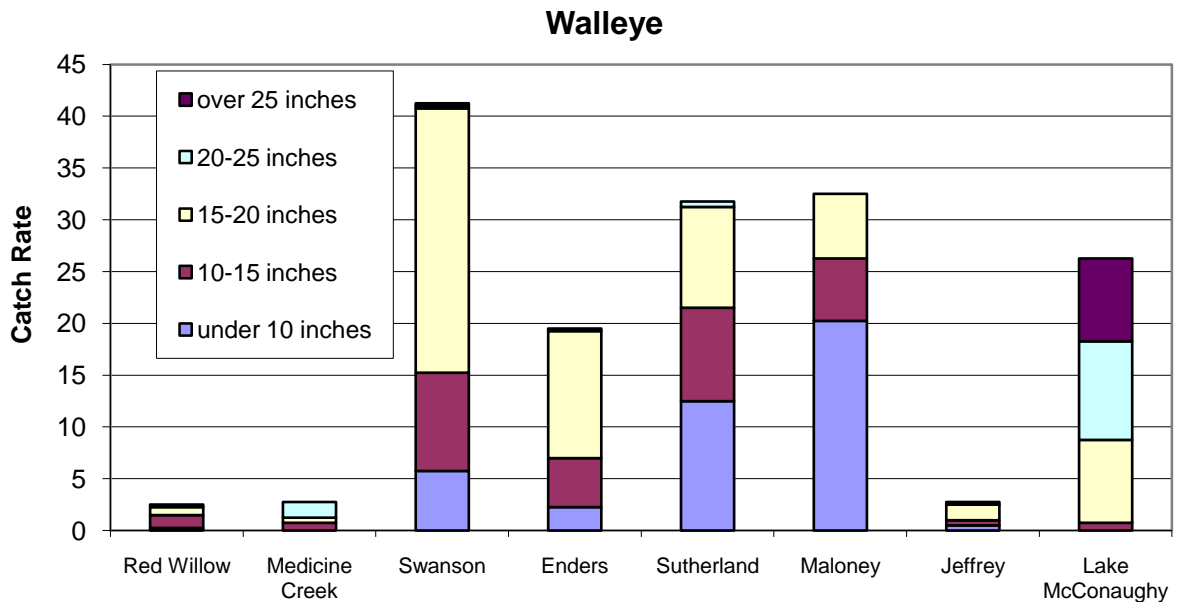




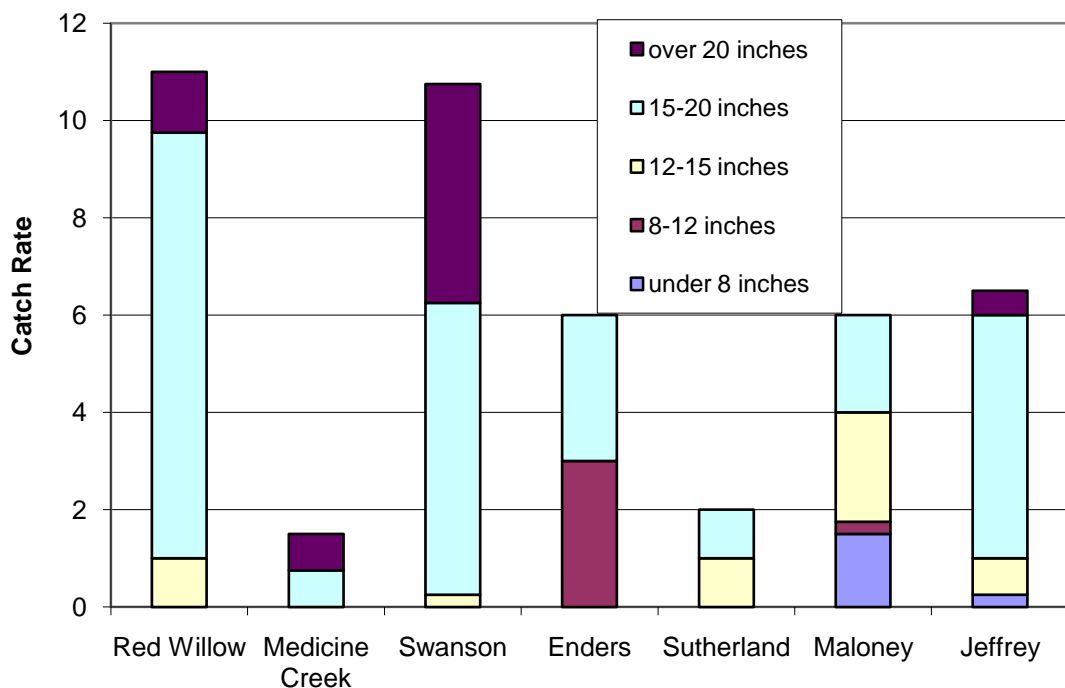
While the numbers of M.A. awards given may not necessarily represent the true number of large fish caught (but not reported), the information is useful for evaluating catch trends. Channel catfish and flathead catfish numbers remain similar to previous years. There was a huge increase in the numbers of wipers reported in 2004 but those numbers have returned to more normal levels. There were 12 channel catfish, 4 flathead catfish, 1 crappie, 2 walleye, and 7 wipers reported in 2008

Darrol Eichner, District Mgr. 308-284-8803, [darrol.eichner@Nebraska.gov](mailto:darrol.eichner@Nebraska.gov)  
 Caleb Huber, Biologist 308-535-8025, [caleb.huber@Nebraska.gov](mailto:caleb.huber@Nebraska.gov)  
 Jared Lorensen, Biologist 308-535-8025, [jared.lorensen@Nebraska.gov](mailto:jared.lorensen@Nebraska.gov)  
 Mark Staab, Cons. Tech. 308-535-8025, [mark.staab@Nebraska.gov](mailto:mark.staab@Nebraska.gov)

The following graphs compare 2009 walleye, white bass, wiper and channel catfish gill net catch rates between Southwest District reservoirs.



## Wiper



## Channel catfish

